

Libfeld & Katz – Stan Bergstein Proximity Award

Al Libfeld

We are quite honoured to have received this prestigious award along with my partner, and friend, Marvin Katz. I'd like to take you back a bit with my harness history. Growing up in the Chicago area, me and my friends were gamblers and after university, we used to go to Maywood, Sportsmans and eventually Balmoral, always trying to beat the odds and win big. I loved it as a punter. After moving to Toronto, I put gambling aside and focused on making money for my growing family. Along comes Marvin, who knows I should be in this game. From racing we migrated to breeding and racing, achieving some success and a lot of failures as proven the formula of this business.

Finally, we hooked up with the late Bart Glass, which led us to our present team of his son Jim Glass, Bob Brady and Bart's very capable replacement Perry Soderberg. They are as much a recipient of this award as Marvin and I are. I'd also like to thank the trainers and the drivers for being significantly a part of the journey to today. Congratulations to Joe (Joe Faraldo) for receiving this award also, well deserved. Congratulations to all the other winners tonight and I'd like to thank the writers for bestowing this on us—it's very special to receive acknowledgement of something that you do with the unbridled passion that Marvin and I have for the sport and the animals.

Marvin Katz

This took 40 years to get here so I'm going to take a few moments and have a few things to say.

This is a profound honour. I want to thank the United States Harness Writers Association and congratulate my fellow recipients Joe Faraldo and Al Libfeld. Some of the most iconic and legendary participants in the history of this sport have previously been similarly recognized. I am deeply grateful and very humbled to join in their company.

My father, David Katz, introduced me to the sport of harness racing. He shared with me many of my earliest experiences in this sport. Accompanying him to Greenwood Raceway in Toronto on many a warm summer night are some of my fondest memories. It was particularly exciting when the Grand Circuit would come to Toronto, with luminaries such as Joe O'Brien, Billy Haughton, Stanley Dancer and all their great horses. Those memorable nights instilled a deep love and passion for the sport of harness racing that still burns fiercely in me today. I know my father would have greatly enjoyed this evening.

Al Libfeld and I first met when we were both in our early 20s. Early in our friendship, we found that we both shared a mutual interest in the sport of harness racing. Once, perhaps over some drinks, I commented to Al that when we are financially able, we need to buy a horse together. Well, as they say in the movies, the rest is history. For many years Al and I have shared a mutual commitment to excellence, integrity and the full pursuit of the very best. Together, we have enriched this shared journey for one another and have made youthful dreams and goals into reality. It has been a privilege and a great pleasure to share this journey with you Al.

Sam Goldband—I know you're watching this tonight—has been my real estate development partner for over 40 years. In addition, he has been an integral part of this long journey. I know his love for this sport is unrivaled. He is often the voice of reason, encouragement and drive to continue from which Al and I have both benefitted. I can honestly say that we would not be standing here tonight were it not for Sam Goldband.

My wife Lynn Katz may be best described as our fourth amigo. Early in her youth, Lynn's father Alfred similarly introduced Lynn to harness racing at Monticello Raceway. That tradition continued with her involvement in the sport today. Her astute business mind and notable corporate experience has been important in the development of our strategies and business models. It's a joyous and irreplaceable to share these achievements together with the person I love.

This harness racing journey has benefitted from the invaluable contributions made by many people who all share with us in this award tonight. After several trying and frustrating years, we were fortunate to meet and become involved with the late Bart Glass. Bart became the mentor, consultant and true friend that Al and I needed. He helped us to begin to understand the true concepts of conformation, depth of pedigree and the development of an elite broodmare band. The Glass family tradition continues today with Bart's son Jimmy, who is an integral and valued member of the Libfeld-Katz team.

The incomparable Perry Soderberg, who has demonstrably changed and advanced the Libfeld-Katz racing and breeding program. Perry's great depth of knowledge, keen eye, and balanced demeanour (which he needs [to deal with us]) have proven to be invaluable. Perry's impact is clearly visible in every aspect of the Libfeld-Katz partnership activities.

Bobby Brady joined our team at a time when we sorely needed a course correction. Bobby's vast experience and knowledge have exponentially advanced the care and development of our broodmares, foals and yearlings. The trips to his Kentucky farm are equally anticipated and highlights of every year.

This is a great team. We truly benefit from them and thank each and every one of them. The Libfeld-Katz broodmare band resonates with one theme: Jimmy Takter. Jimmy's extraordinary skill, talent and philosophies behind many of the great moments we have shared. I firmly believe that his influence will continue to resonate with both him and his daughter Nancy Takter as we all go forward together.

Finally, I want to acknowledge George Segal, Myron Bell, Tony Alagna, Julie and Andy Miller and Yannick Gingras. To all of you, thank you for your skill, for your counsel, dedication, and most of all, for your friendships.

This is a great sport, who's future I firmly believe can be as bright as we want to make it. As we love to say at Libfeld-Katz: the best is yet to come. Thank you for this great honour.